



Implementation Status for Education Bills Passed by the 66th Legislature

HB 211 – Quality Educator Loan Forgiveness Program. The OPI has initiated IT development to collect educator applications, verify eligibility based upon TEAMS data and other sources, determine payment amount and prorate if the total exceeds the appropriation. We plan to put guidance on eligibility on the OPI website for use by school districts and educators as a recruiting tool this year. Because of the changes to the definition of impacted schools and educator shortages, we will use the Critical Quality Educator Shortage Report to be issued by the Board of Public Education (BPE) this November for determining eligibility. Similar to past years, we plan to open the application window from February 1 to March 15 and make payments to lenders in June. We have not yet worked out with the BPE how to administer a provision in the bill to allow the BPE to designate an educator shortage immediately for schools that cannot recruit educators this fall.

HB 351 – Transformational Learning. The bill requires the BPE to establish a rule to set the dates of the application window, so we have worked with the BPE to write and approve this rule as quickly as possible. We anticipate the first application window will open on October 1 and close on November 1. We will have the application form and guidance posted on our website a month in advance of the application window. The bill also requires the BPE to qualify the applications which we anticipate will happen at the November board meeting. The OPI is hiring a transformational learning expert on a short term basis to aid in setting up the application process and to provide resources to school districts just starting with the transformational learning process. We anticipate the BPE to set the application window for future years in the late spring in order to meet the bill's requirement to make payments to school districts by October 1.

HB 387 – Montana Advanced Opportunity Act. This bill has many of the same administrative requirements as HB 351, but the bill appropriated funds beginning in FY 2021. Therefore, the OPI has focused on HB 351 and will use that as a guide to implement HB 387.

SB 140 -Montana Dyslexia Screening and Intervention Act. An MSU professor specializing in dyslexia presented an overview of SB 140 and dyslexia awareness at the Montana Behavioral Institute summer meeting hosted by OPI last week and plans to present the same at several Montana educator conferences this fall. A professional development course on this topic is in development and will be offered on the OPI's Teacher Learning Hub this fall. Educators will have an incentive to take this course as they will earn Continuing Education credits. The recommendations of the Dyslexia Task Force will be published shortly including recommendations for a screening tool. The OPI will create a page on its website explaining SB 140 with links to dyslexia resources.